

Mexican Wolf Blue Range Reintroduction Project Monthly Update

January 1 – 31, 2008

The following is a summary of Mexican wolf reintroduction project activities in Arizona on the Apache-Sitgreaves National Forests (ASNF) and in New Mexico on the Apache National Forest (ANF) and Gila National Forest (GNF), collectively known as the Blue Range Wolf Reintroduction Area (BRWRA). Additional information can be obtained by calling (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 888-459-9653, or by visiting the Arizona Game and Fish Department Web site at <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf> or by visiting the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site at <http://www.fws.gov/southwest/es/mexicanwolf>. Past updates may be viewed on either Web site, or interested parties may sign up to receive this update electronically by visiting <http://www.azgfd.gov/signup>. This update is a public document and information in it can be used for any purpose. The reintroduction project is a multi-agency cooperative effort among the Arizona Game and Fish Department (AGFD), New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF), USDA Forest Service (USFS), USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (USDA APHIS WS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the White Mountain Apache Tribe (WMAT) located on the Fort Apache Indian Reservation (FAIR). Other entities cooperate through the Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) that meets quarterly in Arizona and/or New Mexico, including private individuals, organizations and tribes.

To view the weekly wolf telemetry flight location information or the 3-month wolf distribution map, please visit <http://www.azgfd.gov/wolf>. On the home page, go to the “Wolf Location Information” heading on the right side of the page near the top and scroll to the specific location information you seek.

Please report any wolf sightings or suspected livestock depredations to: (928) 339-4329 or toll free at 888-459-9653. To report incidents of take or harassment of wolves, please call the AGFD 24-hour dispatch (Operation Game Thief) at 800-352-0700.

Numbering System: Mexican wolves are given an identification number recorded in an official studbook that tracks their history. Capital letters (M = Male, F = Female) preceding the number indicate adult animals 24 months or older. Lower case letters (m = male, f = female) indicate wolves younger than 18 months or pups. The capital letter “A” preceding the letter and number indicate alpha wolves.

Definitions: For the purposes of the Monthly Update, a “wolf pack” is defined as two or more wolves that maintain an established home range. The Interagency Field Team (IFT) recognizes that wolves without radio telemetry collars may also form packs. If the IFT confirms that wolves are associating with each other and are resident within the same home range, they will be referenced as a pack.

CURRENT POPULATION STATUS

At the end of January, the collared population consisted of 25 wolves with functional radio collars dispersed among 12 packs and one single wolf. The number of collared wolves is different from the 20 animals reported last month due to the helicopter capture effort on January

17 through 23 and the death of Rim pack f1104. The IFT captured and placed radio telemetry collars on six new wolves and replaced collars on four others. The newly collared wolves are AF1110 in the Hawks Nest pack; AF1111 associated with AM1038, which has been named the Fox Mountain pack; AF1112 associated with AM1045, which has been named the Elk Mountain pack; f1113 associated with the Bluestem pack; AM1114 associated with the San Mateo pack; and F1115 associated with the Middle Fork pack. The recollared wolves are Rim pack AF858, Luna pack AM583, Middle Fork pack AF861 and single M1039. Other uncollared wolves are known to be associating with wolves having radio collars, as well as being separate from known packs.

The IFT completed its 2007 end-of-year population survey in January. During the survey, the IFT observed all 19 wolves with functional collars and observed an additional 16 uncollared wolves, for a total of 35 wolves. The IFT used tracks, scat, prior sightings and other sign to identify 17 more wolves, bringing the 2007 end-of-year minimum wolf population estimate to 52. Among these 52 wolves, the IFT confirmed four breeding pairs – Bluestem, Middle Fork, Paradise and Rim packs. A “breeding pair” is defined as an adult male and an adult female with at least two pups produced during the previous breeding season that survived until December 31 of the year of their birth.

IN ARIZONA:

Bluestem Pack (collared AM806, AF521, F1042 and f1113)

This pack is considered a breeding pair and consists of six wolves; four with functioning radio collars. During the helicopter operation and telemetry flights done on January 16 and January 22, the IFT consistently located the pack in the ASNF. On January 19, the IFT captured and collared f1113.

Hawks Nest Pack (collared AM619 and AF1110)

During the helicopter operation, the IFT observed two wolves in this pack. On January 17, the IFT captured and collared AF1110. The IFT did not observe uncollared AF486 during the helicopter operation, and therefore believes that AF1110 has replaced AF486 as the Hawks Nest pack alpha female.

Paradise Pack (collared AM795 and M1044)

This pack is considered a breeding pair and consists of five wolves observed during the helicopter operation. During the first part of January and on the January 16 telemetry flight, the IFT located the pack in the Greens Peak area. On the January 22 telemetry flight, the IFT located the Paradise pack on the FAIR.

Rim Pack (collared AM1107 and AF858)

This pack is considered a breeding pair and consisted of four wolves at the end of 2007. During the helicopter operation, the IFT observed AF858 and AM1107 traveling together. Throughout January, the IFT located the pack within its traditional range in the central portion of the ASNF. On January 1, the IFT picked up f1104 south of Hannagan Meadow after it was struck by a vehicle. It died while being transported to a veterinarian. On January 14, an uncollared male pup was also killed by a vehicle within the Rim pack home range. On January 20, the IFT

captured AF858 and replaced its existing collar.

ON THE FAIR:

Bacho Pack (collared AM990)

Throughout January, the IFT located AM990 on the FAIR and observed it with an uncollared wolf during the helicopter operation.

Lofer Pack (collared AF1056)

Throughout January, the IFT located AF1056 on the FAIR and observed it with an uncollared wolf during the helicopter operation.

IN NEW MEXICO:

Dark Canyon (collared AM992 and AF923)

During the helicopter operation, the IFT observed two wolves in this pack. Throughout January, the IFT located the pack in the west-central portion of the GNF.

Luna Pack (collared AM583 and uncollared AF562)

During the helicopter operation, the IFT observed four wolves in this pack. Throughout January, the IFT located the pack within its traditional territory in the central portion of the GNF. On January 18, the IFT captured AM583 and replaced its existing collar.

Middle Fork Pack (collared AM871, AF861 and F1115)

This pack is considered a breeding pair and consists of five wolves observed during the helicopter operation. Throughout January, the IFT located the pack in the northern portion of the Gila Wilderness. On January 22, the IFT captured AF861 and replaced its existing radio collar. During the helicopter operation, the IFT discovered that AF861 was suffering from an old leg injury. The IFT transferred AF861 to the project veterinarian for surgery, and then released it back into the wild. On January 22, the IFT captured and collared a yearling female wolf associated with the Middle Fork pack, and assigned it studbook number F1115.

San Mateo Pack (collared AM1114 and AF903)

During the helicopter operation, the IFT observed two wolves in this pack. Throughout January, the IFT located AF903 in the northern portion of the GNF. On January 20, the IFT captured and collared a wolf associated with AF903, and assigned it studbook number AM1114.

Fox Mountain Pack (collared AM1038 and AF1111)

During the helicopter operation, the IFT observed two wolves in this pack. Throughout January, the IFT located AM1038 in the northwestern portion of the ANF. On January 19, the IFT captured and collared a wolf associated with AM1038, formerly a single wolf, and assigned the newly collared wolf studbook number AF1111. The IFT designated the new pair as the Fox Mountain pack; a new pack designation.

Elk Mountain Pack (collared AM1045 and AF1112)

During the helicopter operation, the IFT observed two wolves in this pack. Throughout January,

the IFT located AM1045 in the central portion of the GNF. On January 19, the IFT captured and collared a wolf associated with AM1045, formerly a single wolf, and assigned the newly collared wolf studbook number AF1112. The IFT designated the new pair as the Elk Mountain pack; a new pack designation.

M1039 (collared)

During the first half of January, the IFT located M1039 in the Cibola National Forest. On January 19, the IFT captured M1039 and replaced its existing radio collar. On January 19, the IFT translocated M1039 to Gila Flats in the Gila Wilderness. At the end of January, the IFT located M1039 north of the Aldo Leopold Wilderness.

F1040 (collared)

The IFT searched for F1040 throughout January, but it remains fate unknown.

MORTALITIES

On January 1, Rim pack f1104 was hit by a car and killed south of Hannagan Meadow. On January 14, an uncollared male pup was also hit by a car and killed south of Hannagan Meadow. The IFT assumes this pup was also a member of the Rim pack. Genetic testing is pending.

INCIDENTS

On January 6, the IFT received a report of an injured horse in Apache County, Arizona. The IFT investigation determined that the cause of the injuries was wolf-related. Based on all available evidence, the IFT determined that uncollared wolves caused the injuries.

On January 16, the IFT received a report of a dead horse in Apache County. The IFT investigation determined that the cause of death was wolf-related. Based on all available evidence, the IFT assigned the depredation incident to two uncollared wolves.

CAPTIVE MANAGEMENT

On January 23, captive management personnel separated one pair of wolves at the Sevilleta Wolf Management Facility in New Mexico to prevent breeding.

COMMUNICATION AND COORDINATION

On January 30, the Adaptive Management Work Group (AMWG) held a quarterly meeting at the AGFD office in Pinetop to discuss end-of-year population survey work in progress; capture results; possible translocations; progress on the Annual Work Plan; revisions and public comment of Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) 5.0 – Initial Releases and SOP 6.0 – Wolf Translocations; proposed SOPs 25.0 – Media Access to Field Project and 27.0 – Population Monitoring of Mexican Wolves; and the proposed Interdiction, Incentives and Compensation Program.

PROJECT PERSONNEL

Mike Sumner, AGFD Wildlife Manager, accepted a temporary duty assignment as the AGFD Field Team Leader.

James Waddell accepted a position as USFWS volunteer.

REWARDS OFFERED

The USFWS is offering a reward of up to \$10,000, the AGFD Operation Game Thief is offering a reward of up to \$1,000, and the NMDGF is offering a reward of up to \$500 for information leading to the conviction of the individual(s) responsible for the shooting deaths of Mexican wolves. A variety of non-governmental organizations and private individuals have pledged an additional \$33,000 for a total reward amount of up to \$44,500, depending on the information provided.

Individuals with information they believe may be helpful are urged to call one of the following agencies: USFWS special agents in Mesa, AZ, at (480) 967-7900, in Alpine, AZ, at (928) 339-4232, or in Albuquerque, NM, at (505) 346-7828; the WMAT at (928) 338-1023 or (928) 338-4385; AGFD Operation Game Thief at 1-800-352-0700; or NMDGF Operation Game Thief at 1-800-432-4263. Killing a Mexican wolf is a violation of the Federal Endangered Species Act, and can result in criminal penalties of up to \$50,000 and/or not more than one year in jail, and/or a civil penalty of up to \$25,000.